



ANG

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Editorial

Junk the VFA and other unequal agreements

The recent dismissal by the Supreme Court of a petition filed by patriotic personalities seeking the repeal of the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) is another blow to national sovereignty.

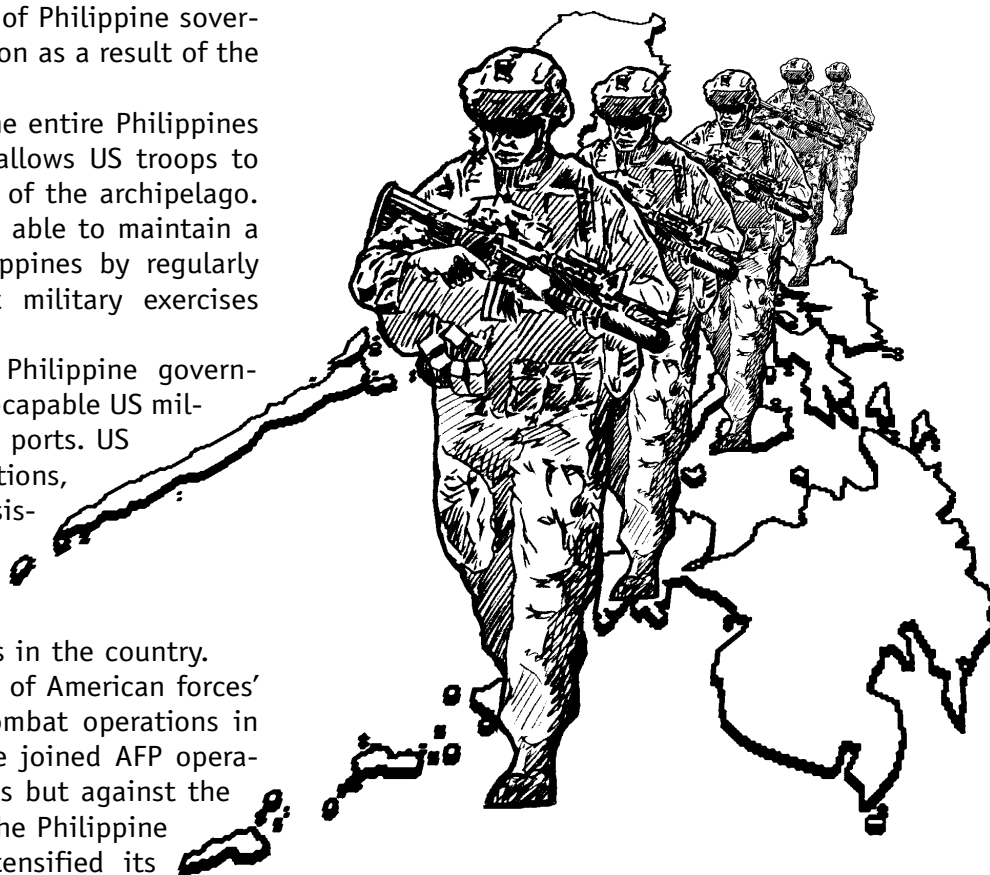
The court's decision on the VFA's alleged legality gives a green light to intensifying US military intervention in the country. We can expect US imperialism's already unbridled violations of Philippine sovereignty to become even more wanton as a result of the court's ruling.

The US has long considered the entire Philippines a virtual military base. The VFA allows US troops to enter and leave through any part of the archipelago. US military forces have also been able to maintain a permanent presence in the Philippines by regularly and frequently conducting joint military exercises every year.

Contrary to the reactionary Philippine government's 1987 constitution, nuclear-capable US military vessels dock in the country's ports. US troops conduct intelligence operations, provide technical and other assistance to the reactionary AFP and directly participate in combat operations against the revolutionary forces and other armed groups in the country.

There have been many reports of American forces' direct participation in various combat operations in Mindanao. American soldiers have joined AFP operations not only against Moro forces but against the New People's Army (NPA). When the Philippine Army 10th Infantry Division intensified its

military operations against NPA revolutionary bases in Southern Mindanao in mid-2008, four American soldiers were reportedly seen inside an AFP tactical command post in Compostela Valley. Using modern equipment, they provided technical intelligence to guide the movements of combat troops of the puppet mili-



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tary forces.

American troops and the puppet army have also been conducting intense reconnaissance and intelligence operations along the perimeter of an AFP camp hosting an ongoing joint military exercise involving the US and Philippine armies in Panay. They face stiff resistance from the Tumanduk people who are victims of government landgrabbing and on whose land the AFP camp now stands.

In Bicol, a number of American soldiers have likewise been sighted joining AFP operations in several towns to "clear" the area for the arrival of even more American forces who will take part in the Balikatan exercises to be held in April.

The VFA is just one of many unequal agreements between the puppet government and its master. On paper, both parties have equal rights. But the VFA actually favors the US and its military troops. There can never be an equal agreement between a master and its puppet.

US military personnel have committed so many crimes and abuses but have not been meted

justice because the US and its forces refuse to submit themselves to Philippine laws and judicial processes.

US Lance Corporal Daniel Smith's rape of a Filipina in 2005 is but one of thousands of crimes in past decades that US authorities have covered up with the connivance of the puppet regime. Among these crimes are killings by American troops of Filipino civilians. The US government has not been held accountable for any of these deaths and the criminals have been spirited out of the country and brought back to the US.

Smith, the only perpetrator to have been convicted and sentenced by a Philippine court was secretly brought to the US Embassy in the dead of night at the end of 2006. No less than leading cabinet officials of the Arroyo regime took him away to avoid having him jailed in a Philippine prison.

The court has ordered a renego-



tiation between the US and the puppet government's Department of Foreign Affairs regarding the return of Smith to a prison facility under the Philippines' jurisdiction. But since the US has no intention of surrendering Smith and allowing him to be incarcerated in the Philippines, and with Gloria Arroyo's puppet government not having the determination or power to assert Philippine sovereignty and claim

what is due the country, nothing can be expected of such a renegotiation.

On the other hand, should a Filipino soldier be accused of a crime in the US, he will be held in a prison under the US government's jurisdiction, in accordance with a recently revealed secret supplemental agreement dubbed "VFA 2."

Even if the VFA's lopsidedness is clear as day, the puppet government ridiculously insists that it cannot unilaterally abrogate it, alleging that it is a treaty. In fact, the VFA has been ratified only by the Philippine Senate. The US does not consider it a real treaty because it has never been ratified by the US Senate.

The VFA is but the latest in a long list of unequal agreements that trample on Philippine sovereignty and reinforce US subjugation of the country, like the Mutual Defense Treaty whose objective is to maintain US dominance in the Philippines and the Asia-Pacific region. It is right to assail and junk the VFA and all other unequal, antinational and oppressive agreements between US imperialism and the puppet government of the Philippines. **AB**



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Millions of pre-need planholders yet to be paid

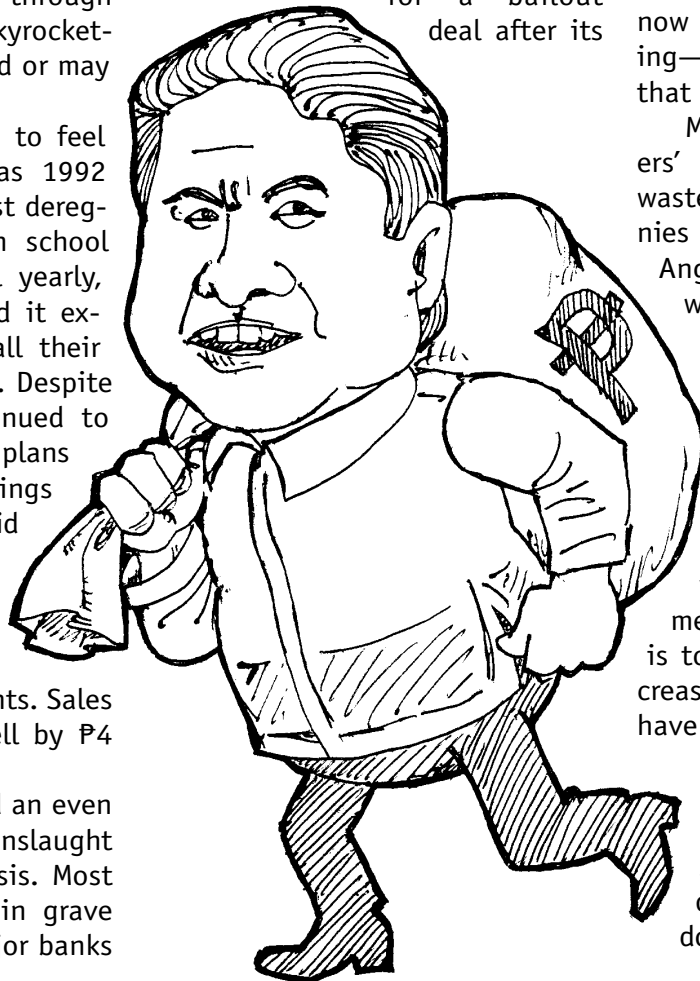
The Philippine Federation of Pre-need Plans Companies Inc. has confirmed that pre-need firms are on the verge of folding up and are finding it difficult to fulfill their obligations to their clients due to the worsening financial crisis in the country and worldwide. This was revealed by its president Atty. Juan Miguel Vasquez in a Senate hearing on pre-need companies held in the second week of February.

Pre-need firms have been unable to pay an estimated P46 billion (70% of their obligations) due their planholders. Most of those who have purchased pre-need educational plans for their children are professionals, rank and file employees and migrant workers whose only hope of putting their children through school is by availing of such plans. More than a million planholders of bankrupt pre-need firms are in danger of not being able to put their children through school as payments for skyrocketing tuition fees are delayed or may not even be forthcoming.

Pre-need firms started to feel the crunch as far back as 1992 when tuition fees were first deregulated in all levels. With school fees on an upward spiral yearly, pre-need firms have found it extremely difficult to pay all their obligations to planholders. Despite this, however, they continued to sell pre-need educational plans and coped by putting ceilings on the amounts they paid to planholders. This led to widespread loss of confidence among pre-need planholders and a drastic drop in the number of clients. Sales by pre-need companies fell by P4 billion last year.

Pre-need firms suffered an even bigger blow due to the onslaught of the global financial crisis. Most of their investments are in grave peril after the crash of major banks

and financial companies in the US and other countries and the collapse anew of the financial instruments they had invested their funds in. Four pre-need firms have shut down and nine others are being closely monitored by the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) because they lack the funds to pay their planholders. Philamlife, the biggest pre-need company in the country is likewise in danger of collapsing and is on the lookout for a bailout deal after its



owner American International Group (AIG), the world's biggest insurance company announced that it was in the red. AIG was on the verge of total bankruptcy when it was bailed out by the US government.

Pre-need firms' handling of their planholders' premiums have also been fraught with anomalies and abuse. Insurance and pre-need companies are not tightly regulated, save for an SEC rule that states that they may invest only up to 25% of their planholders' funds. Most pre-need firms have wantonly violated this rule, using more than 65% of their clients' money to invest in shaky financial instruments—including those that are now going bankrupt and collapsing—as well as other businesses that have already folded up.

Meanwhile, as their planholders' premiums have been put to waste, owners of pre-need companies wallow in luxury. Celso de los Angeles, who owns Legacy Group which manages three anomaly-ridden pre-need companies reportedly owns huge mansions in Ayala Alabang and Cebu, a yacht and at least five luxury vehicles worth up to P10.4 million.

Aside from the Senate investigation, all the government has done through the SEC is to oblige pre-need firms to increase their capitalization. They have been given up to mid-April to submit their own proposals. The companies are reportedly studying whether they could still comply with such a requirement or should close down altogether.

AB

Rule of the generals

Gloria Arroyo has appointed a growing number of retired military and police generals and other officers to her cabinet and other civilian agencies as payback for their loyalty. Arroyo hopes that these officers will keep their mouths shut about anomalies, fascist crimes and electoral fraud where they served as her main operators.

Progressive organizations and other oppositionists have objected to these appointments, fearing that these officers will be utilized by Arroyo to consolidate her hold on power. They also believe that Arroyo's moves form part of her fascist antipeople schemes that hearken back to the steps Marcos had taken before he declared martial law.

Arroyo has appointed her most loyal people and those who have played key roles in her regime.

Eduardo Ermita remains her Executive Secretary. Hermogenes Esperon has been appointed chief of the Presidential Management Staff while Avelino Razon has been named Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process.

Despite so many complaints against his performance, Angelo

Reyes remains in his post as secre-

tary of the Department of Energy. Also remaining as heads of their respective government agencies are Hermogenes Ebdane (Department of Public Works and Highways), Leandro Mendoza (Department of Transportation and Communication) and Arturo Lomibao (Land Transportation Office). A recent appointee as chair of the National Printing Office (NPO) is Tirso Danga, who was embroiled in the "Hello Garci" scandal in 2005. It is widely believed that Danga has been appointed to the NPO to oversee the printing of ballots that will be used for massive electoral fraud in the 2010 polls.

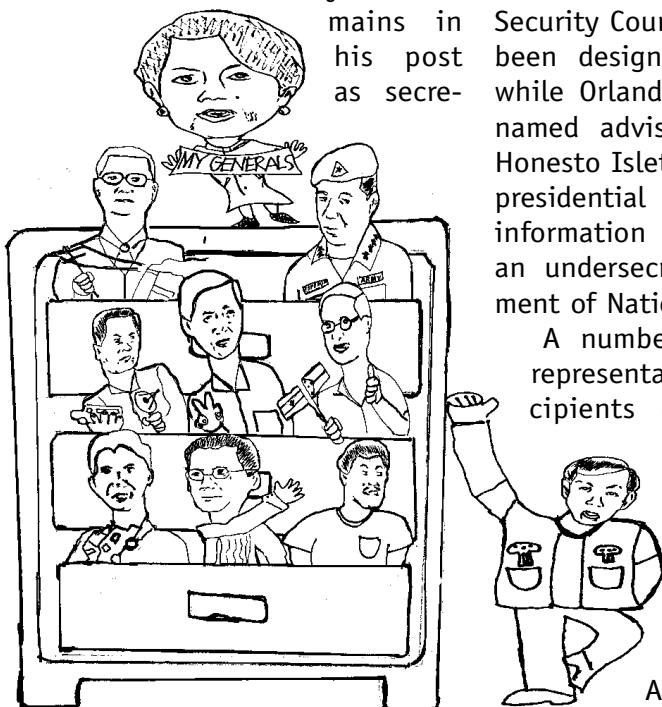
To accommodate her other loyal officers, Arroyo has gone to the extent of creating new offices or posts. Pedro Cabuay Jr. has been appointed deputy secretary for counter-insurgency of the National Security Council. Arturo Carillo has been designated military adviser while Orlando Macaspac has been named adviser on police affairs. Honesto Isleta has been appointed presidential assistant on strategic information and Ernesto Carolina an undersecretary of the Department of National Defense.

A number of ambassadors or representatives are actually recipients of Arroyo's largesse such as Ernesto de Leon, ambassador to Australia; Efren Abu, special envoy to the Brunei-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines-East ASEAN Growth Area;

Roy Cimatu, special envoy to the Middle East; Generoso Senga, ambassador to Iran; Vidal Querol, ambassador to Indonesia; and Benjamin Defensor, ambassador-at-large for counter terrorism.

Meanwhile, Arroyo has also managed to find slots for her minion generals and officers in various agencies and commissions such as Thelmo Cunanan, who now chairs the Social Security System; Oscar Calderon, now director of the Bureau of Corrections; Narciso Abaya, now director of the Bases Conversion Development Authority; Edgardo Espinosa, now managing director of the Manila Economic and Cultural Authority; Proceso Maligalig, now head of the Bataan Shipyard; Roberto Lastimoso, now director of the Metro Rail Transit Corp.; Reynaldo Berroya, now general manager of Metro Rail Transit Corp.; Thompson Lantion, now chair and spokesperson of the LT-FRB; Enrique Galang, now executive director of the Bureau of Immigration; Angel Atutubo, now general manager on security services of the Manila International Airport Authority; Glenn Rabonza, now director of the Office of Civil Defense; Abraham Abesamis, now chief of the National Telecommunications Commission; Edgardo Aglipay, now head of the Philippine Retirement Agency; Florencio Fianza, now head of the Philippine Racing Commission; and Dionisio Santiago, now chief of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency.

Where to appoint Jovito Palparan remains a problem for Arroyo. There are many who oppose appointing Palparan to any post because of his bloody human rights record. Lately, there has been mention of plans to appoint Palparan to head either the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency or the Dangerous Drugs Board.



Ceding national territory to China

The 2009 Baseline Bill surrenders Philippine territory to China. This bill, which sets the territorial boundaries of the Philippines, was approved on February 18 by the Senate and Congress with the instigation of Malacañang. All it now needs is Gloria Arroyo's signature for it to become law.

While formally maintaining "territorial jurisdiction" over the Kalayaan Islands and Scarborough Shoals, the new baseline bill decisively downgrades the Philippine claim of sovereignty over these through their recategorization as a "regime of islands"—supposedly in recognition of claims of ownership by other countries over them in part or in whole. The new baseline not only decisively weakens the Philippine claim over these islands. It, in fact, surrenders the country's exclusive claim over Kalayaan Islands (Spratlys in international nomenclature) and the nearby Scarborough Shoals.

Aside from the Philippines, China, Vietnam, Malaysia and Brunei are also claiming ownership over the Kalayaan Islands in part or in whole. China has been the most aggressive in asserting its claim over the disputed territory.

The sellout by the Arroyo regime of Kalayaan and Scarborough Shoals was effected in exchange for the bribes that Gloria and Mike Arroyo have been receiving from corrupt Chinese bureaucrats and big compradors. The new baseline bill is payback for the millions of dollars in bribe monies and graft amassed by the Arroyo couple and their ilk from fat Chinese contracts, including the anomalous NBN-ZTE deal, the North Rail and South rail and Cyber-education projects,

the Mount Diwalwal mining deal and other bribery and corruption-ridden deals with Chinese corporations. Since Gloria Arroyo began entering into numerous anomalous deals with Chinese officials and corporations, she has been pressing for the outright elimination of the Kalayaan Islands and Scarborough Shoals from the Philippine baseline in order to give way to the claim of the Chinese government of sovereignty over the islands.

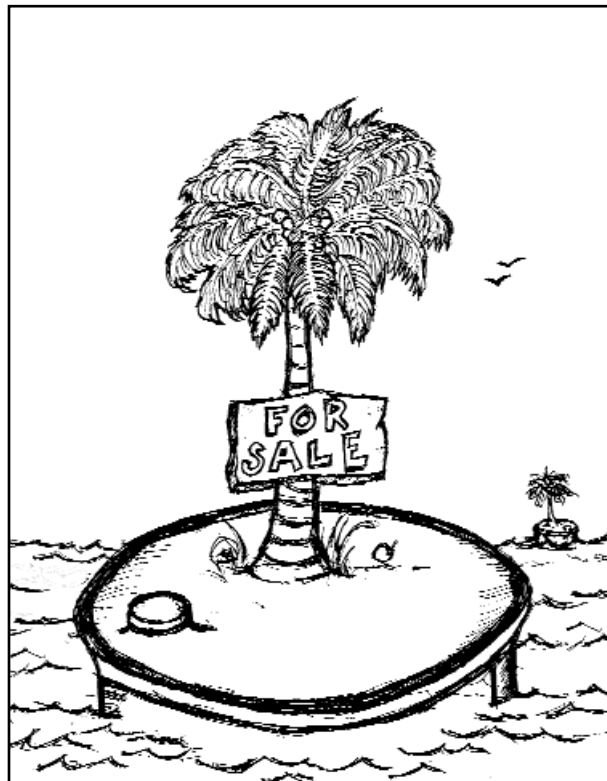
As part of Arroyo's heinous act of national treachery over the Spratlys and Scarborough Shoals, she signed the Joint Marine Seismic Undertaking (JMSU) with Chi-

nese officials in 2004. The deal allowed China to undertake exclusive seismic exploration and data acquisition in and around the Spratlys. After the study was completed by the end of 2005, China's Geology and Mineral Resources Ministry had estimated that the Spratlys area holds oil and natural gas reserves of 17.7 billion tons, much bigger than the oil reserves of Kuwait, which has the fourth biggest oil reserves in the world. None of this information has been shared with the Philippines.

The Arroyo regime's new baseline bill upsets the old baseline bill that was passed into law as Republic Act 3046 (in 1961) amended by Republic Act 5446 (in 1968) and which includes all waters and islands within the 200 nautical mile (equivalent to 370 kilometers) ex-

clusive economic zone as well as all other areas covered by international treaties since 1898. The old national baseline includes the Spratly Islands, which are only 25 kilometers from the western tip of Palawan.

Interest in the Spratlys was heightened after the Philippines discovered natural gas there in 1976. The islands now supply 15% of all petroleum consumed in the country. The Spratlys and their surrounding waters harbor rich mineral and oil reserves and other natural resources. The surrender of the Philippine government's exclusive claim over the Spratlys decisively weakens the claim of the Filipino people over these resources. **AB**





12 soldiers killed in NPA ambush in Sorsogon

Twelve soldiers were killed in an ambush by guerrillas of the NPA Celso Miguez Command (CMC-NPA) in Barangay Batang, Irosin, Sorsogon last February 15. The casualties belonged to a platoon of Scout Rangers and four American soldiers who were carrying out clearing operations in remote villages of Juban and Irosin. There were no casualties on the NPA side.

In addition to those killed, eight soldiers were also wounded and evacuated aboard two helicopters. The enemy suffered most of its casualties after being hit by command-detonated explosives. Four other soldiers ran in the heat of battle and hid in a house at the center of Barangay Batang.

According to Ka Gregorio Bañares, spokesperson of the NDF-Bicol, the

ambush was the CMC-NPA's response to the people's demand to staunchly oppose militarization in the countryside under OBL2 and the conduct of the Balikatan military exercises in the Bicol region and elsewhere in the country.

The CMC-NPA apologized to passengers, motorists, drivers, conductors and barriofolk for cutting down a tree and using it as a roadblock, thereby seriously disrupting their livelihood and mobility. The CMC-NPA explained that its objective was to ensure that no civilians would be caught in the crossfire.

NPA assaults CAFGU detachment

A team from the New People's Army (NPA) attacked a Philippine Army detachment in Barangay Poot, Pandan, Catanduanes last January 22. Two Philippine Army troops and six CAFGU elements were killed. Eight other CAFGU elements were also wounded.

The assault was punishment for a long list of abuses by the military in that detachment, according to the NPA-Catanduanes.

Soldier killed in NPA harassment operation

A soldier from the 47th IB commando unit was killed in a harassment operation by a squad under the Jose Percival Estocada Jr. Command of the New People's Army (NPA) in Barangay Aglinab, Tapaz, Capiz last January 25. The Philippine Army 3rd Infantry Division command attempted to cover up the incident but was later forced to admit it after residents saw their casualties. The military stated, however, that the NPA was on the losing end in the firefight.

Early that morning, the soldiers were unaware that the Red fighters were already closing in as they slumbered peacefully in the vicinity of Barangay Aglinab. The guerrillas were only 15 meters away from the sleeping fascists when they opened fire around 6 a.m. After a few minutes, the guerrillas were able to retreat even before the surprised elite military troops were able to retaliate.

This was the second time the NPA assaulted this commando unit of the 47th IB. On November 29, the NPA ambushed the group along the boundary of Barangay Masaroy, Calinog, Iloilo and Barangay Buri, Tapaz, Capiz. The enemy suffered three dead and one wounded. They attempted to hide their casualties but a number of residents witnessed them spiriting away their dead and wounded to headquarters.

Red fighters raid Danding's hacienda

A unit of the NPA under the Leonardo Panaligan Command-Central Negros attacked a hacienda owned by big bourgeois comprador-landlord Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco Jr. in Barangay Tooy, Himamaylan City last February 8. The guerrillas seized two shotguns and three pistols from the armed guards of Hacienda Nieva and a number of production tools. The NPA also destroyed some large pieces of farm machinery.

According to NDF-Negros spokesperson Ka Frank Fernandez, the NPA's armed action is part of the agrarian revolution being waged in Negros that enables the revolutionary movement to distribute for free the fruits of 5,000 hectares of the Cojuangco family's agricultural lands to peasants and farm workers. Danding Cojuangco was one of the closest cronies of the former dictator Ferdinand Marcos and is a staunch ally of the Arroyo family.

7 civilians wounded in AFP clearing operations

Seven civilians were wounded in Albay after the AFP indiscriminately lobbed grenades during clearing operations for the Balikatan military exercises in Bicol. In Nueva Ecija, the forced evacuation of residents by reactionary troops conducting intense military operations has resulted in widespread dislocation. In Batangas, another activist pastor was illegally arrested, while in Northern Samar, three people, including a staff member of the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP), were ar-

rested without warrant and slapped with fabricated charges. In Davao Oriental, a nun active in the struggle against mining was arrested by the military.

Meanwhile, the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) expressed concern about what it called a pattern of arbitrarily arresting and charging activists with criminal cases. The CHR said that while there has been some decline in ex-

Five decades of serving the people

Family, friends, comrades and the entire revolutionary movement celebrated five decades of service of Comrade Jose Maria "Ka Joema" Sison during his 70th birthday on February 8.

A one-day celebration was held by friends and comrades in exile at the Nassau Church in Amsterdam, The Netherlands. The highlight of the celebration was a cultural presentation illustrating Ka Joema's five decades of service and his invaluable contribution to the revolutionary struggle in the Philippines and the world.

On February 19, his book *Selected Writings of Jose Maria Sison* was launched at the University of the Philippines in Quezon City. The first part of the book tackles justice, socialism and peace while the second part focuses on democracy and socialism against imperialist globalization. The book provides an unswerving revolutionary viewpoint in the face of the worsening global crisis.

Farmers raise palay prices

Farmers of Igbaras, Iloilo succeeded in raising the price of their palay (unhusked rice) products during the harvest season of September-October 2008. They were able to raise the price of first class palay to P15 per kilo, from the previous P13 per kilo, benefiting about 50 peasant families. Almost 100 sacks were sold by the farmers in the area.

Since the 1980s, the price of partially dried palay has been pegged at P6 to P7 per kilo and dried palay at P8 to P9 per kilo. During the lean months of June through August, however, when the farmers' palay supply for the family's consumption has been depleted and their rice crop has yet to be harvested, farmers are forced to purchase palay at P12 to P13 per kilo. This translates to over 100% profit for exploitative merchants. Second class rice, on the other hand, sells at P800 per sack while the super white variety sells for P1,000 per sack during the harvest season. The price of super white rice could come to as high as P1,200 per sack during the lean months.

In order to effectively demand a higher price for their palay, farmers from 10 barangays in Igbaras took collective action through their cooperative.

Their victorious struggle is a testament to the correctness of their demands and actions. A signature campaign in other barangays was launched to petition for a price increase, gathering deep and extensive support from fellow farmers. They also held dialogues with local government officials of Igbaras to gain support for their demands.

After a series of dialogues with palay merchants, the latter agreed to raise farm gate prices but most of them dillydallied in the implementation. The farmers decided to sell their palay in bulk to a single merchant who agreed to a higher price.

Prior to this, the farmers launched a campaign to increase crop production. They used traditional high-yielding rice varieties that did not need commercial fertilizers and pesticides and shunned commercial high-yielding varieties that were dependent on atrociously expensive commercial fertilizers and pesticides. Along with this campaign, they likewise promoted the cultivation of root crops and vegetables.

(Excerpted from Daba-Daba, the revolutionary mass paper of Panay.)



trajudicial killings, there have been more incidents where activists are being charged with non-bailable criminal offenses.

The following are the latest cases gathered by *Ang Bayan*:

February 18. Seven civilians were wounded when troops of the 901st Bde indiscriminately fired an M203 grenade launcher at two houses in Barangay Balanac, Ligao City at around 11:30 a.m. while carrying out clearing operations in the area in preparation for the upcoming Balikatan. The house of Henry and Eufemia Polvorido was hit and caught fire. Also hit was the house of Heremias and Jocelyn Polvorido where the small children and the couple's baby were.

Raphaella (16 months), Ina (age 5), Daisy (age 4), Jullus (age 2) and Andrea (age 4) were seriously injured and are in critical condition. The children's mothers were also hit with shrapnel.

February 16. Sr. Estela Matutina (OSB), a member of Panalipdan, a group fighting against widespread mining and environmental destruction was arrested by elements of the 67th IB. Sr. Estela and other members of Panalipdan were in Cateel, Davao Oriental consulting with local residents on the activities of Omega Gold Mining, which enjoys the protection of the military.

February 11. A pastor of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP) was kidnapped by operatives of the Philippine Air Force and Regional Intelligence Unit of the Calabarzon (Calamba-

Laguna-Batangas-Rizal-Quezon)-PNP in Barangay Alupay, Rosario, Batangas. Without any warrant, six soldiers arrested Edwin Egar, 45, at the house of his relatives at 5 p.m. He was forced to board a black van which was followed by a back-up Honda Civic vehicle. He was then brought to Camp Vicente Lim, Laguna and forced to admit that he knew the activists they were looking for. He was released only after a prolonged interrogation. Pastor Egar is an active member of the UCCP's Commission on Christian Witness and Protection which works for the protection of human rights and the environment.

January 31. Elements of the 71st IB forcibly evacuated 112 families from two barrios in Pantabangan, Nueva Ecija after soldiers of the same military unit were ambushed by the NPA at Kilometer 5 of the National Highway going to Pantabangan. One soldier was killed and two others were wounded in the ambush. Because of ongoing military operations, hundreds of barrio residents were forced to pack themselves into Malbang Barangay High School, Barangay Malbang and in the barangay hall of Villa Rica, Pantabangan. Aside with going hungry in the evacuation centers, the evacuees were extremely worried because other people were harvesting their crops and butcher-

ing their farm animals.

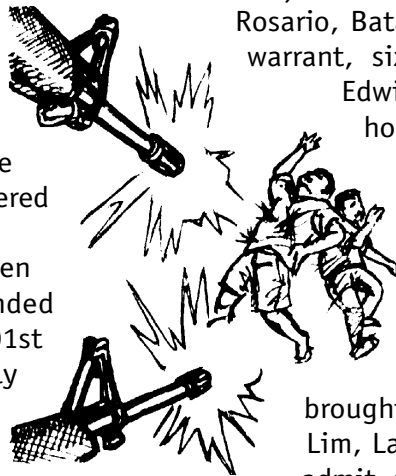
January 27. Military elements illegally arrested Remegio Burac, 49; Felicidad Caparal, 30; and Marites Jumadiao, 38 at a checkpoint in Barangay Urdaneta, Lavezares, Northern Samar last January 27. The soldiers who seized had them no warrant of arrest. In order to cover up the three victims' illegal arrest, the military claimed that they were arrested on January 31. They were only presented to the media last February 4, after the military was able to prepare falsified warrants against them.

The three victims are being forcibly linked to the revolutionary armed movement. Caparal, a staff member of the Unyon ng mga Manggawa sa Agrikultura-Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (UMAKMP), and Jumadiao are being charged with multiple murder in connection with an NPA ambush in December 2002 in Catarman, Northern Samar where two soldiers were killed. Burac was likewise charged with multiple murder in connection with an NPA ambush in

June 2000 in Maslog, Eastern Samar where eight soldiers were killed.

Jumadiao and Caparal are presently being held at the provincial jail in Dancala, Bobon, Northern Samar. Burac, on the other hand, has not been

surfaced after being presented to the media and has not been permitted to communicate with his relatives and lawyer. The military also refuses to reveal his place of detention.



Manalo exposes AFP brutality

Three years have passed but Valentine's Day of 2006 will forever be etched in Raymond Manalo's memory. He was then resting at their house in San Ildefonso, Bulacan, waiting for his date with his girlfriend at around five in the afternoon. That moment never came.

Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan Jr.'s armed men stormed into their house and immediately arrested Raymond along with his elder brother Reynaldo who was then gathering charcoal. They were accused of being members of the New People's Army (NPA).

They were hauled into a van and blindfolded. Their ride seemed to take forever. Inside the van, the abductors took turns hitting the brothers in the chest and stomach. It was already dark when they arrived at a house.

For 18 gruelling months, the Manalo brothers were declared as *desaparecidos* (victims of involuntary disappearance) after Palparan hid them in his clandestine prisons in Nueva Ecija, Bataan and Pangasinan. They managed to escape only on August 12, 2007. The Filipino people owe them a debt of gratitude for their determination to survive and escape. They now serve as living witnesses to the reality of the Arroyo regime's fascist crimes.

In his sworn statement, court testimony and interviews, Raymond revealed all the forms of torture they suffered in the hands of the fascist military soldiers. He was also saw other missing activists and how they were likewise brutally tortured.

Upon their arrival at a house, the brothers were forced into different rooms. In the first hours of their captivity, Raymond could hear his brother pleading as he was being tortured.

By evening, it was his turn. A man entered his cell room, kicked him repeatedly in the chest and sides and poured Raymond's own urine into his nose. He was burned with lighted cigarette butts, pistol whipped and beaten on his buttocks with a piece of wood measuring two by four inches. All the while, Reynaldo was also being tortured in the other room.

Raymond admitted to everything, just to stop the torture, even if they were all lies. That he was a courier. That he was an NPA member. That he murdered all those people whose names they mentioned. "Tomorrow we will kill both

of you," warned the military to the Manalo brothers.

But they were kept alive, only to be tortured again and again.

Crammed inside a small cage.

Raymond was imprisoned in a tiny cell measuring about four feet long and one foot wide. It was too small for one person but there were four of them stuffed inside this cage. The sides were made of hollow blocks and there were steel bars at the front. Whenever the soldiers had their drinking sessions, he would be taken out of the cell to be made fun of by the drunken troopers. The fascist pigs would turn on the water hose and ram it into his nose. The "fun session" would end with Raymond so weak, he had to crawl back to his cage. This brutality was repeated many times over.

They were held in that cage for almost three gruelling months, without sunning or fresh air and were practically skin and bones. They could not stand. If they had to move, they had to do so on all fours because their wrists and ankles were bound together with short chains. They were not fed much. If there was any food, it was leftovers that tasted like pig slop.

One day, Raymond was brought to a barangay hall where he met face to face with Palparan, then the chief of the Philippine Army 7th Infantry Division. Palparan told him, "We will let you live for as long as you cooperate with us." He also promised to let them see their parents.

Raymond was indeed brought to his parents' house,





with chains around his waist and closely surrounded by fascist soldiers the whole time. He told his parents everything Palparan ordered him to say: That they should stop attending hearings for the habeas corpus plea filed in their behalf, refrain from joining rallies, and stop cooperating with Karapatan and other human rights advocates.

On November 21, 2006, Raymond and his brother were moved from the 69th IB headquarters to a detachment of the 24th IB in Barangay Bliss, Limay, Bataan. There, Raymond cooked, drew water, tied goats that the soldiers stole from the masses, washed cars and cleaned the barracks. He was also sometimes sent to do the marketing.

Torture of other prisoners. As Raymond was cleaning the detachment a week after being moved to Bataan, he saw Karen Empeño with both her feet chained to a bed. Karen told him she had been raped by the soldiers. He also saw an elderly farmer, Manuel Merino whom he called Tatay (father) out of respect. Soon after that, Sherlyn Cadapan was brought in. (Empeño, Merino and Cadapan had been abducted in June 2006 from a village in Hagonoy, Bulacan.)

Raymond saw with his own eyes how the two women were dragged out of their cells, stripped of their clothing and their private parts pierced with sticks. They were beaten with wooden planks and chains, burned with lighted cigarettes and electrocuted. They were subjected to "water cure," sometimes by plunging their heads in water or forcing running water from a hose through their mouths and nostrils. The soldiers' wives just looked on as the two women were being bru-

tally violated. The following morning, the soldiers would order Raymond to wash the two women's bloodied underwear. At the time the Manalo brothers were in the same prison as Karen and Sherlyn, the two women were ordered to do the soldiers' laundry, give them massages and sweep the barracks.

Karen and Sherlyn suddenly disappeared after a month. There were also others detained at the detachment who, after being taken out of their cells, were never brought back.

One fateful evening in June 2007, the soldiers took Manuel Merino from his prison cell. Raymond heard the elderly farmer cry out and then heard his groans. Raymond looked out the window and saw Merino's lifeless body being burned by the soldiers. Merino was the seventh victim whose murder Raymond Merino had personally witnessed and whose body was disposed of in the same manner within the detachment.

Raymond was also witness to the torture of Vergilio and Teresa Calilap, who were husband and wife. They couple were held two cells away from Raymond's. Teresa eventually lost her sanity after being raped and tortured by the government soldiers.

There were many other military atrocities Raymond saw. Blindfolded captives would be brought in and ordered to dig their own graves. Their bodies would later be drenched with gasoline and burned. These abominable crimes remained etched in Raymond's mind and strengthened his and his brother's determination to escape and expose the truth to the public, no matter what.

The escape. In July 2007, M/Sgt. Donald Caigas brought the

Manalo brothers to a barrio in Boli-nao, Pangasinan. Caigas is one of Palparan's most trusted henchmen. The brothers were ordered to work on Caigas' land. It was then that they began saving money and planned their escape.

On the evening of August 12, while the soldiers were fast asleep, the brothers saw the opportunity to flee. It wasn't long before they were able to ride a bus bound for Cubao, Quezon City. The brothers took separate seats inside the bus. Raymond instructed Reynaldo that should they be captured, they should cause a commotion to attract public attention.

The Supreme Court found Raymond Manalo's account of their horrible ordeal in the hands of Palparan's men clear and convincing. On October 6, 2008, it upheld an earlier decision by the Court of Appeals to grant the Manalo brothers' petition for a writ of amparo.

Justice nonetheless remains elusive for them and for many other victims of military atrocities.

Despite the huge number of witnesses and a host of evidence pointing to General Palparan as the perpetrator of these crimes, he remains unpunished. In fact, after Palparan's retirement, Gloria Arroyo even chose to reward him with a lucrative post in her government. Plans were underway to appoint him national security adviser. He is now being eyed as chief of the Dangerous Drugs Board. None of Arroyo's plans has so far pushed through because of the people's strong opposition.

But the Filipino people will not stop crying for justice. Neither will the revolutionary forces cease their struggle to help the victims attain the justice they have long been seeking. AB

The truth behind the Tulunan bombing

On February 6, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) indiscriminately fired artillery shells from planes and MG-520 helicopters, hitting mountainous villages in Tulunan, North Cotabato and Magsaysay, Davao del Sur. Over 300 families from the B'laan tribe who live in five barangays in the area feared for their lives and were forced to seek temporary shelter at the Barangay Bacung multi-purpose building and other evacuation centers in Tulunan.

Before the bombings occurred, a firefight had erupted between Red fighters of the Valentin Palamine Command (VPC) under the New People's Army Mt. Alip Command in Far South Mindanao Region and troopers of the 57th IB at Sityo Samwi, Barangay Bacung. The enemy suffered three casualties. On the other hand, Pedro Fabillo (Ka Jekjek), a member of the people's militia, was martyred.

Earlier, elements of the 57th IB and Red fighters of the VPC-NPA had also clashed at Sityo At Dulay, Barangay Bacung on February 2. Red fighter Jerry "Ka Edmund" Saliga was martyred in this firefight.

Simultaneous to the artillery attacks, huge numbers of AFP troops poured into the cluster of villages. The soldiers arrested a farm worker, Danilo Maligante, who had gone to Luayon, Makilala, North Cotabato to harvest peanuts. Maligante's only fault was to be in one of the places where the series of gunbattles had taken place.

In an attempt to cover up the truth and brag to their bosses, the AFP blatantly distorted the facts. Lt. Col. Milfredo Meligrito, 57th IB chief, claimed that seven NPA members had been killed in the bombings conducted by the AFP even if there was not a single casualty among the NPA. He further claimed that Danilo Maligante, a simple peanut farmer, and the two comrades martyred in the firefights were high-ranking officials of NPA Front 72.

The AFP and the Arroyo regime have been conducting military operations in Makilala and Tulunan, North Cotabato in a futile attempt to drive away the revolutionary forces and leave unhampered the landgrabbing activities of foreign firms such as Dole-Stanfilco. The military operations also aim to conceal the victories gained by the NPA and the people after two successful attacks on the giant landgrabbing firm Dole-Stanfilco last year. The NPA punished the company for severely deceiving ordinary farmers; for the destruction of crops around the banana plantation's perimeter after being contaminated by pesticides used by the company; for bleeding the workers dry; and for continuously harassing residents in areas where the company operates.

AB



Growing unrest amid European recession



Since January this year, an estimated 80,000 workers have been laid off every day across the globe, as a result of the deep recession besetting the world capitalist system. Companies suffered heavy losses or had to shut down. To avoid bankruptcy, some companies have implemented wages cuts, reduced working hours or hired new and temporary workers.

The mass of workers responded with anger and protests. In Europe, big demonstrations spread like wildfire against massive retrenchments, unemployment and governmental indifference. Following are the major protest actions in the past weeks:

France. More than a million workers, employees and other sectors trooped to the streets and staged a massive one-day strike to press the Sarkozy government to immediately act on workers' demands for benefits and salaries. The protesters condemned the swift action the government took to bail out the banks in stark contrast to the lack of government support for distressed workers.

Greece. Workers led by the transport, agriculture and fisheries sectors launched a strike in January to demand more benefits and a stop to massive layoffs especially in sectors in peril. Before this, a riot had broken out in Decem-



ber 2008 to condemn the killing of a youth by policemen. The protests spread and were joined by angry workers demanding immediate action against unemployment and poverty and denouncing the government's inaction over the people's demands.

Italy. Protest actions led by union workers greeted the G7 meeting in Rome on February 13. The protesters demonstrated against the inaction by their government and the imperialist countries including the G7 on the continuing retrenchments and the poverty suffered by workers. The G7 is composed of financial ministers and central banks of seven imperialist countries—the US, UK, Japan, Italy, France, Germany and Canada.

United Kingdom. Workers of

oil rigs and electric power plants struck to oppose the termination of senior workers and their replacement by migrant workers. Events such as these foment racism, where workers put the blame on migrant workers who are wrongfully perceived as having stolen their jobs. The number of unemployed in the UK has ballooned to two million, a record high in 12 years.

Russia. Successive protest actions initiated by workers have been taking place in Russia since January 31. Led by the Communist Party, the largest demonstration occurred in Vladivostok, where protesters demanded the ouster of Prime Minister Vladimir Putin. The region used to be the center of automobile factories that now reel from massive job losses. In Moscow, Russia's capital, police-

men arrested several members of the National Bolshevik Party, including its leader Eduard Limonov.

Earlier, over 1,000 Communist Party members were allowed to rally in Moscow.

In non-imperialist European states, successive riots were staged to condemn government inaction over serious work problems and poverty. In these states, protests by rightist, antimigrant and anti-minority groups against migrants are on the rise as these groups perceive migrants as strong competitors for their jobs. Among such states are those formerly within the Soviet bloc such as Lithuania, Czech Republic, Latvia and Bulgaria. These countries had hoped that membership in the European Union would provide them development and stability. **AB**